593 182 462 The conversation becomes animated and laughter spreads. In the dark prairie the camp fires burn. Around the fire, the only protection against the cold which descends, behind the frail windbreak of palms [342] and branches hastily planted in the ground on the side where wind or [415] rain is expected; near the baskets filled with poor objects which constitute their whole earthly treasure; lying on the ground which extends around, haunted only by other bands equally hostile and fearful, the couples, embracing tightly, are truly seen as the support of one another, the comfort, the only help against the daily difficulties and the dreamy melancholy invades the Nambikwara soul from time to time. The visitor who camps in the brush with the Indians for the first time feels tenderness as well as anguish and pity before the spectacle of this humanity so completely unprotected; crushed, apparently against the soil of a hostile land by some implacable cataclysm; naked, shivering around the hesitant fires. He circulates tip-toe among the underbrush, in the dark, avoiding crushing in his walk a hand, an arm, a trunk, whose warm reflections are seen by the light of the fires. But this misery is animated by whispering and laughter. [56] The couples clasp one another as in the nostalgia of a lost union. Their caresses, at the same time tender and candid, are not interrupted by the passage of the stranger. One senses in all [57] of them an immense gentleness, a profound carelessness, a naive and charming animal satisfaction, and, emanating from all that, something like the most moving and credible expression of human tenderness.

593 831 462 562 [517] Thus it is not surprising that the attitude of the two sexes as concerns one another is characterized by intense interest. This interest is translated in certain cases by the vocabulary. In fact the Nambikwara have only one word to express "pretty" and "young," and a single word to signify "ugly" and "old" (munʒene, ʒeʒene, bi). Their esthetic judgments are thus based essentially on human considerations, and above all, sexual ones. But the interest which is manifested between the sexes is of a complex nature. Men judge women in a mass, as being a little different from themselves. Depending on the situation, they consider them with desire, admiration, or tenderness. In itself the confusion of terms pointed out above constitutes permanent homage. But it must not be forgotten that the form of economic adaptation realized by sexual division of labor a capital role attributes to the women, since family life rests to a very large degree (probably the greatest) on the collecting of the women, but it represents an [58] inferior type of activity. The ideal life is conceived on the model of agricultural production or hunting. To have plenty of manioc, and

fat pieces of meat is a constantly relished dream, even though rarely realized. On the other hand, the provisions haphazardly collected are considered—and really are—the daily misery. In Nambikwara folklore, the expression "to eat grasshoppers" (tagare uritige, bl), a typically feminine and infantile harvest, is nearly equivalent to the French "to eat the mad cow" (to rough it). At the same time the woman is considered a tender and good being, but of the second order. The language which she uses habitually separates her from the men and unites her with the children (in the same way that she collaborates with the children in expeditions of collecting and gleaning). We shall see later that this assimilation also continues into the metaphysical thinking and that, on this latter plan, discrimination between the sexes attains proportions whose psychological attitudes are only a derisive indication. It is considered well-bred for men to speak of women with a pitying good will, and, in conversations between the two sexes, to address them with a slightly mocking indulgence. Certain sayings are heard often among men speaking among themselves:

5. uĩtnoẽunatũkhne joʔotnuũutnãdnjani denẽunatukhne. (bl)
The children do not know, I know, the women do not know.

and they bring up the group of women (dosu, al), their jokes, their conversations, with a tone of tenderness and mockery. But, of course, that is only [57] a social attitude. When the man finds himself alone with his wife around the camp fire, he listens to her complaints, considers her demands attentively, asks her help in a hundred undertakings. The male line of talk disappears, and gives way to the collaboration of two partners conscious of the essential value which they have for one another.

This ambiguity of male attitude as regards women has its exact correspondence in the equally ambivalent behavior of the female group. The women think of themselves collectively, and manifest it in several ways. In the first place they do not talk like the men. Even though a sexual language does not exist in the true sense of the word, in conversation a thousand inflections, shades of pronunciation are found which are typically feminine. Women articulate badly and affect a sort of jabbering which is reminiscent of infants' pronunciation. They whisper instead of talking out loud, and emit sounds with an affected mannerism and preciosity which are at times seductive when they are not exasperating. Thus, in dialect al, they give words an ending —ũ instead of the usual—u or —tu. They also pronounce—kititu, the verbal suffix which is for men, —kedjutu or —kedjuru.

834 nights" kanaro'etẽndige (b1); inversely, nights without moon are
842 particularly approved, as well as rainy periods. In 1938 the rains
834 were late, and the first shower came in September after six months of
[833] total drought. The event, so long awaited, was immediately celebrated by B1, who did not even wait for night to have sexual relations with his youngest wife b2. However, day-time relations are rare, and the act was carried out more ostensibly than usual, behind the thin palms of a shelter. Immediately afterwards B1 supplied a spontaneous commentary on meteorological prohibitions. Sexual relations are also, at least theoretically, forbidden between husband and wife
[856] [65] from the birth of the child to the time when he can walk. This event is hurried along by rubbing his legs with the juice of a non-identified plant (tokri?iri, c) "so that he will walk quickly, so that another can be made" (1); but, by "another," is understood, un-

[71] 1. The same custom existed among the ancient Tupi. Cf. Cardim, Tratado da terra et da gente do Brasil, new ed., Rio-de-Janeiro, 1925, p. 170.

doubtedly sexual intercourse rather than their result, rarely welcome:
[847] the Nambikwara women often have recourse to abortion, and they are familiar with a great number of plants and roots for that use. We were not able to obtain a specimen.

831 The attitude of the Nambikwara toward things pertaining to
832 love can be summed up in their formula tamĩndige mõndage, translated literally, if not elegantly: "To make love is good." We have already mentioned the erotic atmosphere which fills daily life. Love affairs hold the interest and curiosity of the Indians to the highest degree. They are eager for conversation on these subjects, and the remarks exchanged in the camp are filled with allusions and hidden
[833] meanings. However, sexual relations are rare, and the prohibitions which limit them explain this state of affairs only partially. The thing truly responsible seems rather to be indigenous temperament.
[847] In the course of the amorous games to which couples give themselves over so willingly and so publicly, and which are often very far advanced, we have never been able to note the beginning of an erection. The pleasure looked for seems to be less of the physical order
833 than playful and sentimental. Sexual relations usually take place at night, and often not far from the fires of the camp. More often the couple draws back about a hundred meters into the neighboring bush. This departure is noted immediately, and gives rise to the most

585 The union of the husband and wife is pronounced by the chief who places in the mouth of each a large piece of fish. (1)

831

1. It has already been suggested (Kunike, "Der Fisch als Fruchtbarkeitssymbol bei den Waldindianern Südamerikas, Anthropos, VII 1912, p. 206-229) that the fish could be a sexual symbol among the South American Indians. Tastevin has vigorously criticised this hypothesis (Le poisson symbole de Fécondité ou de Fertilité chez les Indiens de l'Amérique du Sud, Id., IX 1914, p. 405-417). However, the Nambikwara ritual of marriage seems to confirm the first theory. Moreover, fish is directly treated as the symbol of sexual relations in the legend where Maire-Pochy makes a girl pregnant by [110] making her eat the fish which he himself had fished. As the origin of this Tupi story is certainly Andean (Kunike, loc.cit.; Métraux, p. 12-13; Ehrenreich, Ueber die Verbreitung und Wanderung der Mythen bei den Naturvölkern Südamerikas, Congrès International des Américanistes, Stuttgart, 1904, p. 663) we have there a supplementary piece of information concerning the affinity of the Nambikwara with the cultures of the North and West.

881 [110] There is no puberty ceremony for the boys. This is replaced by a ritual of initiation which takes place toward the ninth or tenth year, apparently. It is composed of two essential operations, [55] the giving of a name, and the piercing of the lip and of the nasal 305 septum to place some wood ornaments there. The first operation is done directly by the chief, the second by a companion whom he designates to this effect:

50. getnoãdige iochãdige ullikade uelikãdelhinere nukerere indeig
iurdenie nikama iurojãtige (b1)
When the boy is grown the chief, the chief gives him a name. A companion pierces his lip to put in the ornament. He [the chief] orders the hole [for the ornament] to be made.

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